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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the techniques developed by Valdosta State College's Department of Modern Foreign Languages to promote interest in the study of foreign languages and culture. The techniques are divided into two major categories: internal and external. External activities include those for the benefit of high school students and teachers and members of the community. These activities include an annual state-wide essay contest and language festival, a cultural exchange program, a group uniting all small high school foreign language clubs, administration of the National Spanish Examination and of the National French Contest, teaching workshops for high school teachers, and various cultural events such as film festivals and exhibits for the community. The internal programs, benefiting the college students and the college community, have instituted laboratory material to be used at home, taped classes, free tutoring sessions, revised curriculum descriptions, double specialization whereby a student can combine languages, and new fields of study in which foreign languages play a major part. Each innovation is described briefly. The results of these programs are increased enrollments and renewed interest in foreign language study. (CLK)

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THE CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE AN INTEREST IN LANGUAGE STUDY AT VALDOSTA STATE COLLEGE

Outline

External Program

- For High School Students
  1. Annual State-Wide Essay Contest
  2. Annual Language Festival
  3. Cultural Exchange Program
  4. V.S.C. Club of the 10,000
  5. National Spanish Examination
  6. National French Contest
  7. Who's Who
- For High School Teachers
  1. Mini-Workshop
  2. Annual Saturday Workshop
  3. Newsletter
- For the Community
  1. International Christmas Celebration
  2. Foreign Film Festivals
  3. Cultural Exhibits
  4. Magic Carpet Programs

Internal Program

- For College Students
  1. Home Lab
  2. Taped Classes
  3. Free Tutoring (by natives)
  4. Revised Curriculum Descriptions
  5. Double Specialization
  6. New Fields of Study

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The Campaign to Promote Interest in Language Study at Valdosta State College

by: Dr. José B. Fernández

I've been asked to speak today on the various techniques which the faculty members of the Department of Modern Foreign Languages of Valdosta State College (Valdosta, GA) have developed to promote interest in the study of foreign languages and cultures.

I'm presenting these ideas to you not as sure-fire ways to improve your department, but only as suggestions and bases for programs which you might like to try in your own special situation.

Today we are living in an era when we are called on to justify our existence at every turn and to determine in advance the necessity of what we are asking our students to "buy". This phenomenon not only holds true in the commercial world, but also in the area of academics.

Today's students ask, and justifiably so, "What must I study to graduate and be successful?", but they also ask "Why?". The responsibility for answering these basic questions falls directly on our shoulders, resulting in a required change of stance from the one we had when all our students were forced into our foreign language classes.

Our first line of defense becomes our first direction of attack: Information and promotion. We are, of course, each assured of the inherent value of our disciplines, and that certainty is what we must convey to the students when they ask "What?" and "Why?". In response to these questions, we at Valdosta State College have undertaken a massive promotional program, which I will now outline for you. For a clearer presentation, I have broken our endeavors into two categories: One external (things that we do for a public outside the college) and the other internal (things that we do for our own students and our college community).

I. Our EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES concentrate on high school students, secondary school language teachers, and the general community.

A. For high school students we offer:

An ANNUAL STATE-WIDE ESSAY CONTEST IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES with established topics for the various levels.

An ANNUAL LANGUAGE FESTIVAL on our campus, the high point of which is the noon banquet at which we make the awards to the winners of the essay contest. Besides promoting interest in high school language programs, this event on our campus has the added advantage of familiarizing the students with our college language program.

Our CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM enables us to make visits to the high schools all around our area. Here various members of my department, at the request of the high school teacher, bring a slide program, film program or cultural presentation into the high school language class. Many times, our professors are accompanied by foreign students from the college, who add authentic flavor to the discussions.

The VSC CLUB OF 10,000 is our response to the battle-cry "United We Stand; Divided We Fall". Its idea is to unite into one large group all the small high school foreign language clubs. We began last year to register in our Club of 10,000 language students from around the state in order to give them access to our sources of cultural material. Posters, slides, films, pamphlets, and other cultural materials are available in Spanish from the National Spanish Tourist Office in St. Augustine, Florida, and in French from the Office of the Cultural Attache, French Consulate, in New Orleans. In addition

we offer planned trips to St. Sugustine and New Orleans. This year, in coöperation with the Foreign Study League, we are offering a 28-day language study tour to France and to Spain. Also, in our efforts to promote interest in foreign languages, Valdosta State College has assumed the responsibility for the administration of the NATIONAL SPANISH EXAMINATION IN GEORGIA and of the NATIONAL FRENCH CONTEST in our state. This extra effort is a result of our dedication to helping high school language teachers promote interest among their students, for we feel that these competitions are excellent vehicles for promotion and that they also strengthen us through association with the AATSP and the AATF.

Our newest effort to promote solidarity and pride among foreign language students is our forthcoming first annual edition of WHO'S WHO IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY IN GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR COLLEGES. So far, the response has been tremendous, and we have now almost completed our computerized mailing list of every foreign language teacher in Georgia. Each teacher will be contacted this month and requested to nominate his/her best language students for inclusion in this publication, which will be released early in the spring. The idea for this project was suggested to us by a small news article in the FRENCH REVIEW which reported inauguration of this project at the University of Evansville in Indiana.

B. For high school language teachers we offer:

A quarterly MINI-WORKSHOP dealing with typical classroom problems of grammar, reading techniques, etc.

An ANNUAL SATURDAY WORKSHOP FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS, featuring noted foreign language educators and state foreign language consultants.

Professor C. Lee Bradley, our Coördinator of French Studies has been the overall director of this activity, and we are now, on February 21, going to have our 5th ANNUAL WORKSHOP.

We also publish a monthly NEWSLETTER for the spreading of ideas and information about language meetings, etc. and to serve as a central source, keeping teachers throughout the state aware of what others are doing and the successful devices they are using to promote foreign languages.

C. For the community we have:

An INTERNATIONAL CHRISTMAS CLELBRATION in conjunction with our College Student Union and the Valdosta International Club. This celebration brings together persons of various nationalities who provide our own students with an insight into foreign cultures and with additional incentive for studying language. Members of the community also participate in our FOREIGN FILM FESTIVALS, CULTURAL EXHIBITS, and our MAGIC CARPET PROGRAMS, a cultural program of slides taken by our faculty members, students and natives during trips to the country of our target languages. These latter are designed primarily for increasing the understanding of foreign countries among our own students, but they are well attended by the community and by high school students and teachers.

II. INTERNALLY - for our own college foreign language students, we have instituted the following:

HOME LAB - a flexible system of providing, on loan, cassette recordings of lab material to accompany the work in class.

TAPED CLASSES - for those students who miss class or who want to review material presented in class, each professor in our

Department tapes his class-room presentation (elementary as well as advanced) and these are available through our Home-Lab check-our system.

FREE TUTORING SESSIONS - one hour daily, by native speakers of French, German, and Spanish, as an adjunct to the lab experience. Emphasis is on conversation, pronunciation, and review.

REVISED CURRICULUM DESCRIPTIONS - we are now in the process of renovating our catalogue descriptions of our language courses in order to provide a more descriptive and appealing statement of what the student can expect to learn in each course. For example, Spanish 101 - Elementary Spanish, is not very exciting, and we are planning to change it.

DOUBLE SPECIALIZATION - in an effort to provide our students with more opportunities for employment with a bachelor's degree, we urge them to combine another specialization with Spanish, French, German and Russian. For example, we have students studying Language and Business, Language and Education, Language and Psychology, Language and English, Language and Sociology, and even Language and Biology.

NEW FIELDS OF STUDY - we are also expanding into new fields of study in which foreign languages play a major part. We are now awaiting approval of a M. Ed. with emphasis in a foreign language (Spanish, French, German) and are also working on programs in International Studies and International Business.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is working!! In recent years, we have increased our enrollment steadily from one year to the next. A great portion of our success, we believe, is due to the many signs posted all over the campus announcing our activities and proclaiming our slogan: "WE CARE!" In our spirit of coöperation

with colleagues, we believe that working together is the only way by which we can restore the study of foreign languages to the prestigious position which it deserves, . . .

. . . BECAUSE WE CARE!

If you have any questions or would like to be placed on our mailing list, I would appreciate your writing your name, address, and the language you are connected with on one of these cards so that we can stay in touch with each other.

Thank you.

THE END